DOCUMENTARY NEWS LETTER

SEPT., 1942

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TODAY NOT TOMORROW

THE PRIME MINISTER, reporting to the House of Commons on the Russian position, said that he had found it difficult to explain to the Russians the problems of this country in failing to come more rapidly to Russia's assistance. He said that it was difficult for a great land power to understand the difficulties facing a great sea power in planning any considerable offensive. While this lack of understanding is bad for political reasons, it is a disgraceful reflection on our information and propaganda services, that after so many months of association, we have still not explained ourselves, or our contribution to the war effort, to our Ally.

How badly we have failed is well illustrated by recent newspaper despatches from Russia on our film showing and distribution there. Films are a method of propaganda and information well recognised by the Russians, and a medium that they have powerfully and successfully used in this country. Apart from the deep sympathy for a country that is carrying the major burden of a war, the people of this country have been given a greater appreciation of Russia through the amazingly good film propaganda they have done. There is no doubt that we have the films to do a similar job in Russia. In quantity and quality of production there is a great body of films that would give the Russian people an accurate picture of our contribution to the joint effort.

There is no doubt, as the Prime Minister has endorsed, that the Russian Government and people are profoundly disturbed by our seemingly small contribution. Yet we have a great story to tell—we carried the burden of the fight against Fascism alone for a long period—we are now making a great effort in the weakening of Fascist resources. That story is on the screen, but it does not get to Russia. It appears that a certain few films have been sent, but at least one of them was not well calculated to improve Anglo-Russian relations.

There are two instances in recent newspaper reports: in the first, a report on a two-day congress arranged by the Soviet Film Committee and Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries. At the congress all the great figures of the Soviet cinema spoke—Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Dovzhenko—and *The Times* man who reported the congress said that, "it was inevitably mainly of the American cinema that most of those who took part spoke, though British newsreel operators were mentioned by the director of that remarkable documentary film *Leningrad at War*, . . . British documentary films, the most notable achievement of the British film industry, appear to be virtually unknown here.

"Speakers were interested in the cinema as a political instrument and urged that the Western film industry, with all its immense technique and experience, should now concentrate on the task of interpreting the war." It appeared that British films, at the congress, were represented by the *Private Life of Henry VIII* and a newsreel of a Mediterranean convoy. *The Times* correspondent went on to say that, "it is to be hoped that before long steps will be taken to bring to Moscow a representative collection of British documentary films which, even if they are shown only to a restricted audience, would aid much to cement the cultural relations that are growing, in spite of all difficulties, between the Allies."

The second instance is the message sent by the film workers of Russia to British film workers. In their message they said that they had seen the films entitled *London Holds Out*, *British A.A. Gunners*, *Women in the Air Service*, and other films.

It is disgraceful after so many months and with such a wealth of film telling our story, that we should be represented in this way in Russia. Many tales are told of transport difficulties; in fact *The Times* in a leader, said it considered the matter of vital importance, and stated that only six pounds a fortnight can be sent by air and a package takes three months by sea to get to Kuibyshev. But Russia has been in the war a long time and we have made a great many films for a long time, and an aged feature film and a newsreel is surely not well calculated to give the Russian film workers a good impression of the job which Britain is doing to interpret the war. Presumably the transport problem cuts both ways, and if Russia can flood this country, indeed she has flooded all the Allied countries, with film, these difficulties of transportation may be ones of imagination or incompetence. There is a rumour that a ton of film has been in a warehouse in a country adjacent to Russia. That kind of excuse is not good enough. We can explain ourselves to Russia, and film is by far the best medium. To quote *The Times* leader in conclusion:—

"This is the more deplorable in that we have just the kind of film which Russian people would be likely to appreciate. Into the development of British 'documentaries', which set out to dramatise the worker, the organisation in which he works and the social problems which beset him, there has gone more energetic thinking and more integrity of purpose than into any other kind of English film. They have been made not with one speculative eye on what it might please a particular audience to be shown, but with the simple minded purpose of studying their subjects and of disengaging from them what is significant. As evidence of what we are doing and of what we are, they have the impartiality of honest art."

NOTES OF THE MONTH

Five Minutes and Trailers

EXHIBITORS, especially independents, have given thousands of hours of free running time to the country and on top of that have booked and paid for quite a number of the better propaganda films.

But there are also some cinemas, especially among the circuits, who have never shown a five-minuter and quite a large number, 50 per cent, who go to the trouble of cutting the trailers off the end of the newsreel.

The excuse is usually that there is not time to fit the 1½ minute trailer or the 6½ minute film into the programmes. Quite a number of these cinemas have found time to run advertising films however.

Now, not running an ordinary propaganda film is not helping the country or the war. But recently the Ministry issued a film called *A New Fire Bomb* and it was of vital importance that everyone in the country should see the film immediately. Even this film on which the lives of people actually depend, was not run in some cinemas. Knowing the exhibitors' love of business you would have thought that they would have been inclined to run it just to keep their audience alive so that they could continue coming to the cinema. But joking apart, any exhibitor who did not run this film moves from the unpatriotic class and becomes an actual traitor.

Falling Stars

PITY THE film stars. At the age of seventeen, dewy and innocent, they commence their careers. If they are lucky, they may make the grade somewhere around the age of twenty-three, still dewy but hardly as innocent. Featured players, lovely, young, the delight of the camera. The world is at their feet, every advertisement, every magazine, tells us the charming secrets of their blameless private lives. The box office gives them a welcome which, if it is not enthusiastic, does at least show promise of better things to come. They shine brightly for a few films, sometimes their names even figure in front of the film's title in the advertisements. Clark Gable and Miss So-and-So with the magic, prestige-giving word, IN, after the much plugged name. They look as though they are set for stardom. But then comes a kind of a shadow, a lull in this busy career. The bright star fades a little. Interest wanes. How many pretty faces can one dimly remember fading, fading, only to be remembered when the yellowing leaves of some old film magazine are idly turned. Youth and beauty and a tiny talent are obviously not enough.

To this story there are exceptions. The lives of those whom somebody so aptly called the cinemoppets must be another kind of hell, first trying to look years older than they are and then, as time's withering hand falls, trying desperately to look years younger.

The names which delight us and the box office have been with us many, many years. We pay to see Jean Arthur, Garbo, Claudette Colbert, Myrna Loy, Dietrich, Margaret Sullavan, Bette Davis. Even among the men, to whom presumably age should not offer such perils, it is Gable, Boyer, Crosby, Gabin, Chaplin and Laurel and Hardy to see whom we willingly pay our shillings. With due respect to our acknowledged favourites and at the risk of seeming ungallant we suggest that none of these charmers, male and female, could be called chickens. Many years of hard work and lots of experience have brought them to the top. Compare luscious Miss Lana Turner with Miss Dietrich. Miss Turner has youth and even more than it takes, but somehow Miss Dietrich makes much more of a mark. And yet Hollywood is thought of as a paradise of youth. Many years have passed since *The Atonement of Gosta Berling*, *Ten Cents a Dance*, *The Blue Angel*, *Manslaughter*, *The Man who Played God* and the Fu Manchu films showed us Garbo, Stanwyck, Dietrich, Colbert, Bette Davis and Jean Arthur, all of them still stars even if they have, in their long careers, suffered temporary eclipses. Can you remember Myrna Loy as a perpetual Eastern temptress, Ginger Rogers as a chorus girl with a couple of lines, William Powell a snake in the desert? It all took place many years ago. And yet it must be admitted that one gesture of any of these favourites is worth all the curves of an Oomph, Ping or Ting-a-ling girl or any bronzed young man however laughing his torso.

So pity the poor dears, who in the flush of youth, when Nature is with them, beck and nod and wreathed smile included, know that the laurels of true stardom cannot be won until they present more than somewhat of a problem to the camera. At the age of twenty-three they have Youth and Beauty, but only passing time, brushing them gently here and there, giving experience but taking the bloom, can give them pre-eminence and the ability to give the perfect and enchanting performance. It must be a hell of a life.

Comings and Goings

THERE WILL BE a general welcome on both sides of the Atlantic to the appointment of George Archibald to take charge of official British film activities in the United States. No one is better equipped by experience and temperament for the task of bringing into closer and more efficient relationship the use of the film as a weapon of war in the two countries. Archibald's main job will be to build up in America a wide distribution of films calculated to present a picture of Britain, the British war effort and the British vision of the future (if any should be officially forthcoming). In addition to this, however, his presence will contribute substantially to the gearing together of the propaganda machines of the two continents. Archibald is a man of wide experience with many contacts and interests outside the world of film. It is his experience as the head of United Artists' European organisation which gives him his first qualification for his present post, but his early days as a lawyer and his recent experiences as a farmer, together with his contacts with politics and civil defence (as Deputy Regional Commissioner for the Midlands) will make him a figure of some significance in the American scene.

DOCUMENTARY NEWS LETTER has been pressing for a long time for the appointment of qualified overseas representatives to assist the film effort. One good appointment has been made and we understand that others are shortly to follow. Let us hope that in making them the Ministry of Information will continue to remember that the war has become now a very practical matter; that it is the man who will get results with his sleeves rolled up in the workshop of his job, rather than the scintillating drawing-room conversationalist, who will most impress our Allies.

DOCUMENTARY NEWS LETTER

stands for the use of film as a medium of propaganda and instruction in the interests of the people of Great Britain and the Empire and in the interests of common people all over the world.

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M.O.I.—WHAT PLANS HAVE YOU?

A deal of controversy rages around the M.O.I. Film Division. The following two articles, though by different writers, present a similar point of view

THE harvest is gathered and there is already a slight sharpness in the early morning air. It can be felt in the fields and in the streets and by the open windows. It promises refreshment but it also tells of hard days ahead. Days in which we shall discover whether the work of the summer has been well done, whether the days of preparation were well occupied.

We wonder whether this warning chill has yet penetrated into the labyrinthine corridors of the Ministry of Information. Do those stout walls and wooden-hutted door-keepers insulate against the weather as efficiently as they seem to guard the inhabitants against all other changes in the outside world? We cannot believe that some wanton eddy of cold air has not at least strayed, however daringly, into that particular corridor where the indestructible butterflies of the Films Division still flash and flicker in the shafts of the already departing sun. Where Purple Emperor and Red Admiral, Sulphur Yellow and Camberwell Beauty, Swallowtail and Cabbage White dance and dart about their business as though high summer were eternal.

Perhaps, pretty creatures, they feel that their toil has earned them exemption from winter's rigours as indeed their honest labours have given them a life which, compared with the butterflies' few hours, must seem eternal. But can they keep their colours fresh and their wings strong when the buddleia no longer flowers and the brave young seedlings are cabbages, stiff and lonely in the snow? What plans have our gay and cynical butterflies got to carry them through the dark days? The chill air whispers of destruction for those who are not prepared, the destruction of death, or the worse and living death of working in a vacuum, without results. They have many times in the past given us fresh hope and new visions, but now we ask ourselves whether they have the will to do so in the future.

But enough of these entomological parallels, they have but served to introduce our question. Have the Films Division got a plan for the future, or did they indeed ever even have a plan for the future which is now past? There was a time when the mere fact of their producing films of any kind appeared to be a sort of miracle. When the present gang took over, after months of Civil Service mumpings and mouthings, they faced a tough task.

But they did manage to get films made and to them must go the credit. They have made all kinds of films, some good, some bad, but good or bad they all possess one grave defect and that defect arises from the fact that, as far as one can tell, the films were made to no plan. At first this lack of planning was not apparent, but as time went on, putting their programme into perspective, it became more and more obvious. Production figures soared. Their films began to cover this country at war. Factories and food, the Services and agriculture, science and the arts. The camera eyes of many units were sent to look at everything and they looked well and honestly. They collected vast libraries of material and they turned them into films. Everybody was busy and enthusiastic.

It was when the Films Division came to inspect these films which they themselves had ordered and the scripts of which they had finally approved, that the minds of the film-makers were troubled. Firstly, these films which had often taken much sweat and toil to produce, occupying many peoples' minds and time, were made to seem of no importance. Officials came to the theatre as to a torture chamber, moaning and groaning as if in anticipation of grievous pain. There were indeed occasions when they bounded in all wreathed with smiles, but the smiles quickly turned to frowns when they discovered that it was not the latest Paramount musical which they had been invited to see.

Then after the showing comes the inquest and here the complete lack of planning begins to show itself.

The officials are prepared to praise or blame, to argue the nicety of a cut or the quality of a piece of sound, to regale the company with their own personal reactions to the film even before it has ceased running. But few ever talk of the film in relation to a programme, whether it supplements another film or whether it falls into its place in a scheme. Few ever discuss whether that film is going to carry any message to anybody or whether the many and varied audiences who will see it will respond to it.

This state of pother continues. Films are ordered and after many struggles with this department and that they get made and are eventually shown. To what purpose is all this activity?

Surely propaganda, to be effective, must present different aspects but they must all be aspects of the same truth. And where, in any Ministry film is that binding, inspiring, vitalising truth to be found. This film says kill your rats, this film says give your baby black-currant juice, this film says look at Britain enjoying itself, this film says here is a bombing raid and this film says here are the healers at work. All these films give their immediate message more or less well—the dance hall is as large as life, the bombing raid bears the stamp of truth, the rats are artfully destroyed. But nothing adds up, the total effect is only as great as each single film. What has gone before and what is to come raise no cumulative image to inspire and fortify. Yesterday we showed you a factory worker, today we give you food, tomorrow we will show you Russians. Unless we have a bright idea and decide to show you potted shrimps instead.

The Big Job

Nobody would deny that the films being made are doing part of a good job, but many believe that they could do more. The line is missing, the flaming, burning belief in the message is not there. This belief should run through all the films from rats to Hurricanes, transforming them, integrating them and strengthening them.

That is the big job of the Ministry. There is a job vacant. "Wanted. An Angel complete with flaming sword to guard the Ministry doors and cry continually, 'Embrace Belief all ye who enter here'."

It would need an angel; but in the meantime the Films Division could help by tidying up their house a little. While doing so they might even discover the angel tangled up in the telephone wires or smothered under the memos and minutes. Their organisation and planning seems specifically arranged to produce chaos and nothing else. Their elementary arithmetic is that of the clowns in the harlequinade dividing up the fish.

It would appear that they usually start by making an effort to organise. This company shall make this film plus a certain number of others, another company shall make such and such. It is all very fair and very just and entirely crazy. For having apportioned their films they sit back and wait results. They do not take into account the fact that some of the films may be in preparation for weeks, some may get bogged in inter-Ministerial arguments and some languish and die because nobody is interested. On paper a film unit may be fully occupied, in reality the entire unit may be

doing nothing, while two script writers wrestle with innumerable official problems.

One of the most frequent causes of delay is due to the fact that the film-makers, who have no official status, are often left to do jobs which should be done by the Ministry. This often suggests lack of co-ordination between the Ministry of Information and the particular Ministry concerned with the film in hand. That the Films Division in consultation with their film-makers, should decide how the message should be turned into celluloid no one will deny, but there should surely be some agreement between the Films Division and the relevant Ministry on what that message should be. At present the film-maker shuttles to and fro between Ministries, a tiring referee in some eternal boxing match. Or again, within the Films Division itself, there is often disagreement. One person passes a script and the film is put in hand. Somebody else within the Films Division then sees the script and disagrees over certain points. Work on the film is stopped while everybody argues the toss.

A film is commissioned and work on the script started. The first draft is approved with minor alterations, the second is approved, a shooting script is prepared—everything is running smoothly. The unit is ready, the budget prepared. Then everything falls to pieces. It is discovered that other, expert, departments have heard nothing of the film at all and are perhaps rightly annoyed that they have not been consulted. They are usually in a strong enough position to hold the film up and so we go back to the beginning again with a new treatment wanted.

An Efficiency Plan

Perhaps a film on a certain technical subject is given to a unit to make. The film is a success and obviously by the time it is shown there are two or three people in that unit who have learnt a good deal about the subject and have got to know the experts involved. The Ministry decide to have another film made on another angle of the same subject. Do they go to the unit who made the first film? Of course not. They give it to a different unit who start at the beginning and go through all the same preliminary stages again, learning the stuff from the letter A. Nobody wants to spend a life-time making films on one subject, but there is surely room for an efficiency plan here, a plan whereby it is not necessarily the same directors that make every film, but a plan that allows for the same script writers and contact makers.

There are a dozen other instances which could be cited by any film unit whereby the work in hand could be organised and made efficient, but before we leave this question, we would like to mention—very softly and quietly—the matter of the Ministry of Information Library. We are not quite certain who is responsible for this delightful little cess-pit, whether it is the Crown Film Unit or the Films Division, but as it contains all the Films Division material, it should be their job to see that it is run properly. By now it must contain the finest and most comprehensive collection of material ever assembled. Library material is often an essential part of war propaganda films, saving as it does, time, money and labour. Often the material is unique and cannot be shot again. So rich in material is it that, in fact, it should be nearly always possible to use library shots that have never been seen before by the public.

Can anybody get a shot out of it even when instructed to do so by the Films Division? No. There are editors who but yesterday were sane and healthy and who, to-day, are gibbering lunatics, staring wild-eyed at those strips of celluloid which carry the words "Missing Scene". Editors who have made the long sad journey to Pinewood and wrestled for hours with the chaos in the library. There are cutting-copies which have grown old and dusty waiting for the one missing shot which somebody once glibly said could be got from the library. But enough of this horrible subject. We have only forced ourselves to mention it—and the mere thought is an acute pain—because we believe that to make a muddle of the everyday things is also to muddle the major issues.

And so it goes on. Many of the difficulties are of course, merely part of the inevitable hold-ups due to the war for which the films are being made, but many are just the result of plain bad planning.

Thus there is a situation in which film propaganda is being emasculated for want of a major plan, which means first of all a lack of faith, a need for a belief. On a secondary plane it is doubly difficult to make film propaganda owing to the lack of day-to-day planning by the executives of the Films Division—the two problems are we believe inter-related.

Let the Films Division have an autumn cleaning and put their house in order and then let them pause and ask themselves exactly what they are getting at. We shall be surprised if they find an immediate answer. The mere fact of considering the matter may, of course, only result in yet another carefully initialled file. We prefer to believe that they could find a solution which could be a message of faith to us all.

In the summer time the butterflies flew bravely and gave us fresh hope. Now, if they would do the same glad job in the dark winter months and bring us and our Allies, the Americans, the Russians and the Chinese, heartening messages of ourselves at war, they must plan.

Peacock and Fritillary, Red Admiral and Purple Emperor, what are you doing and where are you going?

Spiritual Offensive

MR. BRENDAN BRACKEN recently made one of his rare public pronouncements. The Minister of Information had made a discovery about the British people. "The British" he said, "have a sort of relish for bad news. The Government were never more popular than when the news was absolutely frightening. It was when they got a victory or two that people said, 'How much longer are these old codgers going to remain in office?' "

If the British people were indeed as complacently masochistic as Mr. Bracken suggests (it is interesting that his opposite number Dr. Goebbels, put forward a similar idea during the blitz) then no one would have to bear so much of the blame as the man whose professional responsibility it is to minister to British morale. Fortunately, however, Brendan Bracken cannot be accused of turning us into passively appreciative spectators of national crises, he can only be suspected of not minding if we should become something of that kind.

The Bracken tendency

We do not know whether the Minister of Information is interested in films. Yet even if he is quite unaware of the work of the Films Division, the fact remains that the Bracken tendency to turn a beaming eye upon warning signals appears to be influencing even this Division—the most realistically-minded of his Ministry. For the Films Division increasingly shows signs of being lost in the abstract philosophical contemplation of triumph and disaster as equally transient phenomena ("impostors", Kipling called them) which are incapable of affecting the manifold and delightfully quixotic virtues of the British people. "We British people are wonderful" they seem to say. "Quite apart from how the war is going, look how tough the people of Dover still are, look what a jolly time working-class people have when they throw a party and look what a bunch of bright boys work in the docks." For these are the main propaganda messages to be derived from 21 *Miles*, *Work Party* and *Dockers*, three recent five-minuters selected at random and above average in imagination and sincerity of approach. Other films show how even the most apparently useless jobs may be part of the war effort (*Essential Jobs*), how the Army makes sure to put the right man in the right job (*The Right Man*), how pleasant it is on a troopship (*Troopship*) and how we won the Battle of Britain back in 1940 (*This Day Saved the World*). All these films have been made in the last month or two

and during the same period we have had a few films discreetly hinting at social reform—*New Towns for Old* and *Rehabilitation* for example.

What is the total propaganda effect of the foregoing list of productions? Together with a number of first-rate technical instructional films they represent a considerable proportion of the recent M.O.I. output for home distribution. Surely we can say no more for them than that they tell us (and, in some cases, our Allies too) that we are a remarkable people engaged in a variety of wonderful activities. We have our whimsical forgivable little faults of course, but for the most part we are God's gift to civilisation.

Notice also that the message of British magnificence which they carry is presented not with fire or passion but only with a humdrum self-assurance. In none of these films is there any quality which tears at the heart as would a true picture of a great people in the critical agonies of a struggle to survive.

Although in its present phase, we are losing the war, only very occasionally do we get any hint from an M.O.I. film of the great historical importance of the days through which we are passing. No attempt is made to inspire us with the grandeur of the issues. Strangely enough we can do it for other people but not for ourselves. Bad news or good news, it's all the same to us, says the Minister and his Ministry. But we can feel more deeply about China—for look at *Chiang Kai-shek Visits India*, a supremely simple and supremely moving little film.

The Films Division must show us in its propaganda what are the "vitalities", the living issues involved. The people of this country have no "relish for bad news". If they have become indifferent to news, good or bad, it is because the good news they really wish to hear, *the news of a new and vital world to be won, has always been withheld from them.*

But it is not only a question of viewing the war with passion. There is a demand also for reasoned films of world strategy which will take good news and bad news out of the chaotic jumble of parochial conceptions and fit them into a world pattern. Such films are the best possible antidote for jingoistic complacency.

Before the war it was widely suspected overseas that Britain was in decay. The principal symptom was a national listlessness and want of vitality. The events of 1940 began to disprove the theory, but the proof will not be complete until we have demonstrated a vitality which not only can defend us against seemingly hopeless odds but which also can take the spiritual offensive. In inspiring and articulating this national renaissance Mr. Bracken and his Films Division have a task for which they should be prepared to forsake the amused or admiring contemplation of English idiosyncrasy.

NEW DOCUMENTARY FILMS

His Majesty's Jollies. *Production:* Paramount News. *Director:* G. T. Cummings. Two reels. *Subject:* The Royal Marines. M.O.I.
Treatment: Everybody slips up now and again, and the better they are the harder they fall. Paramount News have the well-earned reputation of presenting first class material in a first-class way. In this film they have certainly got the material—there is one staggering pan shot across a parade ground which looks like a de Mille arena shot and some superb invasion practice stuff—but nothing much has been done with it. There is a half-hearted attempt to peg the whole thing on to one young recruit but this doesn't get us very far. No character will come to life just because a few shots are taken of him at random. Probably more natural sound would have helped.
Propaganda Value: The film covers the ground and shows us what the Marines' job is and how they train. That's about all.

As a recruiting film it will probably do a good job. The commentary has managed to get across the idea of a select body of men with tradition and determination and a feeling of adventure. But with such a grand subject it could hardly have done otherwise.

[NOTE: We were sorry that Ian Coster was not in time for inclusion in the film. Perhaps one day he will give us the real story which this film might have told.]

National Fire Service Mobilising Procedure. Shell Film Unit. *Director:* Kay Mander. *Camera:* Pat Gay. *Producer:* E. Anstey. Two-reel training film. M.O.I.
This is an exhaustive treatment of fire-fighting organisation under blitz conditions, made with painstaking accuracy. It refuses to be sidetracked into dwelling on truly magnificent blazes shown but briefly in the film and sticks grimly to the mobilisation of pumps and appliances. Despite the background of inferno, the film gives a picture of calm, efficient organisation carried out by immaculately uniformed and closely co-operating staffs. Hell may have broken loose in London, but one has the comforting impression that reason is in process of controlling if not mastering the effects of maniacal destruction. The film carries out its job of exposition competently, and should prove to be useful for training purposes.

C.E.M.A. Strand Film Co. *Producer:* Alex Shaw. *Directors:* John Banting, Dylan Thomas, Charles de Lautour, Alan Osbiston, Peter Scott, Desmond Dickenson. *Camera:* Charles Marlborough. Two reels. M.O.I.
If this were not a non-theatrical film one would feel justified in complaining about the tedious and unattractive introduction in which Richard Butler, President of the Board of Education, outlines the purposes of the Council for the Encouragement of Music and Art. Otherwise the film is rich in picture and sound. It takes one to rehearsals, to concerts, plays and recitals, and succeeds in giving the impression that the workers of Britain are getting entertainment of a high standard in their spare time. What it omits to tell is how much of this entertainment is given and how widespread it is. It does show the use being made of available buildings, churches, canteens, etc.

In this film an experiment in production was made by utilising different directors for different episodes. As the film that follows Mr. Butler's introduction is impressionist and not explanatory, the experiment would seem to have succeeded in giving added colour and vitality.

H.M.S. King George V. Verity Films. Compiled by L. Laurence from material shot by Raymond Elton. One reel. M.O.I.
An account of life on the battleship with but little omitted in showing "how the wheels go round". An intelligent schoolboy would be impressed though perhaps not thrilled or inspired to join the Navy. The chief defect is that the sea plays no part in the film and the battleship seems capable of every function but that of sailing. As a result the ship does not acquire a personality and inspires no devotion or affection. However, the film gives a great deal of information and leaves one impressed by the efficiency and ingenuity displayed by shipbuilders, engineers, and by the Navy.

Chiang Kai-shek in India. Indian Film Unit. *Director:* Ezra Mir. Re-commentated for Britain. Five minutes. M.O.I.
Most has been made of the slender material available, mainly newsreel, and of a sympathetically worded commentary. The film gives some slight information about China, shows us brief pictures of the Chinese people and devotes most of its time to showing Chiang Kai-shek and his wife on their visit to India. It is a pity that more information about the objects of the visit had not been given in the commentary and that the significance of the event had not received greater emphasis.

Worker and War Front No. 2. Non-Theatrical. Composite production by several units. One reel. M.O.I.
This series may well turn out to be a refreshing break-away from the routine M.O.I. film. The second issue covers three or four subjects. The opening one gives a telling comparison between the great social event, the Agricultural Show of 1939, and a war-time agricultural show which is down to earth and down to business. A second item deals with the National Seamen's Union and its advantageous removal from bombed-out London premises to a country mansion and estate. A lively item is from Russia showing factory workers entertaining their fellows during leisure hours.

Clamping Potatoes. Realist Film Unit. Ministry of Information for Ministry of Agriculture. 8 minutes.
An instructional film for farmers. A pleasant, well-made film. The story is clearly told and the potatoes well and truly clamped.

A New Fire Bomb. Shell Film Unit. *Director:* Napier Bell. *Producer:* Edgar Anstey. *Camera:* Stanley Rodwell. 5 minutes. M.O.I.
An explanation of how to deal with the new fire bomb that contains an explosive charge. This film does its job very well indeed and leaves no doubts about the correct method of procedure.

(*Continued on page* 130)

WAR-TIME FILM PLANS IN U.S.

From an American Correspondent

SINCE America came into the war a large number of changes have been made in the United States Government and commercial film set-up. America has been quicker to press forward with war-time film plans than England was. The war is, of course, three years older than it was when the Ministry of Information set up its Film Department and the war is at a much more critical stage.

In peace-time a number of American Government departments had their own film producing and distribution departments; for example, the Department of Agriculture maintained a Production Department which turned out a large number of films dealing with the Government's policy in agriculture, and also films explaining to farmers the new techniques of farming as they were developed in the Government's research stations.

This department ran a film library and agents round the country showed the films on 16 mm. projectors to farmer audiences. A number of other Government departments such as the Department of Commerce and the Bureau of Mines operated on a similar basis. There was, therefore, in the Government set-up a good precedent for film production and distribution.

Throughout the country State Universities and Municipal Authorities supported film libraries. Most of these operated to cover the territory of a State and the University Extension Department was the moving force.

Through these libraries and from the Government Central Libraries at Washington some 25,000 16-mm. projectors were served. But the production was piecemeal, there was little relation between the activities of one Government Department and those of another, and high standards of production were exceptional. Sometimes, however, brilliant, if sporadic, ventures produced outstanding films. We all remember the period in which Lorentz turned out such notable films as *The Plow That Broke the Plains* and *The River*.

British versus U.S.

On the whole, however, United States documentary compared unfavourably with British documentary. The reason for this is easily found. British documentary films were the first films to put Britain on the screen. For a long period commercial British production aped Hollywood products and there was no recognisable picture of Britain on British screens. Then came early documentary films and commanded attention not only for their high technical standard and for their interesting experiments but also for the picture of a real and recognisable Britain which they put on the screen. In the United States this curious situation did not, of course, obtain. Hollywood, in spite of its many faults and shortcomings, was always American. If the picture of America which spread over the screens of the world was not authentic it was at least recognisable. Americans learned of themselves from American films. There still remained a need for films of authentic American life, but the need was not so apparent there as it was in England.

There was not, therefore, the demand for documentary production in America and the few documentary producers did not gain wide currency for their pictures in American theatres. Only a few very outstanding American documentaries commanded theatrical distribution.

After 1939, and before America came into the war, the American production programmes, however, could not neglect the war. While America was not a belligerent the catastrophe which spread itself across three continents began to provide America with its story material and all America's films had to face up to the war.

The films produced by U.S. Government Departments began to be coloured by the war. United States agriculture was no longer a matter of domestic concern. The United States was beginning to look to the problem of feeding a starving Europe and beginning to gear itself to meet the period of reconstruction. Lease-Lend meant that the American armament industry was beginning to operate on a war-time scale although America herself was not a belligerent. Films about agriculture became war films before American was in the war. Films about industry became war films too.

At this time the film field in America was still un-coordinated. The existing departments continued to produce their programmes as in peace-time, although their subject matter became more warlike.

The Office of Emergency Management began to produce films describing America's non-belligerent participation in the war, but the film unit operating from this office had no relations with the existing peace-time Government units.

The Office of the Co-ordinator for Inter-American Affairs, which concerns itself with the relations between the United States and the Latin American Republics was pressing ahead with a programme of cultural films to promote understanding and sympathy for the United States in Latin America, and for the South American Republics in the United States. This programme involved the production and distribution of films in both the U.S.A. and South America.

The State Department (America's Foreign Office) were anxious to promote the despatch abroad to Great Britain of any films which would help people here to understand what was going on in America. This was more a gesture of good-will than a piece of actual co-operation because a regular flow of films was not yet available.

Here and there independent sponsors made films, sometimes about their organisations and sometimes about life in America. These were of varying quality and remained independent productions un-coordinated with the Government's activities. Here and there independent documentary producers were raking together the handful of dollars which would enable them to make a one-reeler according to their own preferences.

This was the situation in America until the summer of this year; a considerable activity, unrelated, competing and not very productive.

In the summer of this year, by an executive order of the President, a new Office was created This was, in fact, America's Ministry of Information—the Office of War Information. Radio Commentator and ex-journalist Elmer Davis became its chief. He is responsible for all information services at home and abroad with the exception of the Office of the Co-ordinator of Inter-American Affairs which continues its cultural activities as before. (The work of this office was fully described in the last issue of D.N.L.) Under Davis there is a Film Bureau. Director of this is Lowell Mellett and the Chief of Production is Sam Spewack. Mellett has his representative in Hollywood, Arthur Poynter. Facing this official department stands the War Activities Committee representing the Industry. Mellett, in collaboration with the War Activities Committee, can arrange for the production and for the distribution of information films. This is done in two ways. At the Hollywood end the commercial shorts producers have pledged themselves to produce at least 26 short films per year. These will be in place of part of Hollywood's normal shorts output and will be distributed through the existing channels for shorts distribution. The subjects will be proposed to the War Activities Committee at Hollywood by Mellett's representative there. They will be financed by the industry and distributed in the usual manner. O.W.I. through their own film unit will produce twenty-six information films, and these will be distributed through the War Activities Committee on a free basis. Fourteen thousand motion picture houses have pledged themselves to show these films. This means in round terms that the O.W.I. will be responsible for a film each week in the cinemas of America.

History of the War

Outstanding among Mellett's theatrical releases is *The World at War*, a seven-reel news reel compilation edited by Sam Spewack, who wrote the narration. This is a history of the war since Japan fired the first shots into China. The film is outstanding for its brilliant editing and clever cutting. Nearly all the material is, in fact familiar to regular cinemagoers, but the careful choice of shots and the brilliant commentary gives the film pace and a new freshness.

Mellett's Film Bureau will be primarily concerned with the production of films for the United States and their release there. Another department will be responsible for films about America going overseas. This Bureau is headed by playwright Robert Sherwood and his film officer is Robert Riskin who recently studied the Ministry of Information's work at London.

In practice, Riskin will work in close collaboration with Mellett and it is probable that most of his films for overseas will be re-edited versions of the films which Mellett prepares for the Unites States. There is, however, a growing realisation that films must be specially produced for overseas and that in Great Britain, for example, there is a growing demand for films which will describe the life and character of the United States.

Official visitors from Britain's Ministry of Information have made it clear to the United States Government that Hollywood has not given a full enough picture of life in the United States and that in England there is as much ignorance of American life as there is in America of the life of England. That this problem is of

first importance is realised on both sides of the Atlantic, and now with the intermingling of Americans with the English population a clearer picture of their background and of their customs is necessary. It is to be hoped, therefore, that the Sherwood-Riskin Office will secure the production of films specially designed to give the English people a fundamental understanding of the American people.

The Office of the Co-ordinator of Inter-American Affairs continues to work independently of the O.W.I. Already a series of films dealing with South American Republics is being released non-theatrically in the United States and films on America are beginning to percolate into the Latin American Republics. Nelson Rockefeller is the Co-ordinator of Inter-American Affairs and his film plans are in the hands of Kenneth MacGowan and Philip Dunn.

The film programmes of the Services remain independent. As in England a fairly clear distinction is made between films for the Services and films for the general public. While O.W.I. chief Elmer Davis is given the right to control all film policy, in practice the Services go their own way.

Hollywood names head the Army's film departments. Lt.-Col. Darryl Zanuck is in charge of all training films and Major Capra looks after morale films. Major William Wyler is in charge of U.S. Army Air Corps films.

Out on the wing is the little talked of Office of Strategic Services which reports and advises the President on strategy. Commander John Ford is in charge of films in this section and has already shot thousands of feet of operational and strategic material.

Out of Ford's material shot at the Battle of Midway Island has been made an 18-minute short which is being released in America through O.W.I. It has now been received in this country and will shortly be seen on British screens.

This film is particularly interesting as it is the product of a little developed technique; 16-mm. cameras shooting on Kodachrome were used and Technicolour 35-mm. prints were made by enlargement. The film was then cut and scored and issued to the theatres in its 35-mm. form. This is, of course, a process which cannot be carried out in England at the moment. English laboratories are not equipped to enlarge 16-mm Kodachrome. The results are not only interesting but quite spectacular as first class photographic material is achieved by this enlarging process.

New Strategy

Now that the American Government have introduced the element of order into what was chaotic the next problem is the working out of a new strategy of film propaganda. Already, departments which had been working independently, for example, the Office of Civilian Defence, are being brought into line and made part of one film effort.

The next problem is to secure international strategy in film work. In this respect the U.S. occupies a key position. It is a hemispheric centre. To the north lies the vigorous National Film Board of Canada with a domestic and foreign plan. To the south lie Latin American Republics with a rapidly developing organisation of exchange with the U.S.

New York is the practical headquarters of the O.W.I.'s Film Bureau, and at New York also is the British Information Services.

The British Film Service which here operated on a limited front has now been re-organised. Mr. George Archibald is to take over the direction of this important service and will have under him departments dealing with the theatrical distribution of British Government films in America and with the non-theatrical distribution of the Ministry of Information's films. A British Film Library, already established at New York, is in the process of de-centralisation to Washington, Chicago, San Francisco and Los Angeles. Various M.O.I. officials have recently visited the United States and it is believed that a programme of collaboration with the United States Government has been worked out.

Apart from the desirability that authentic pictures describing life in Great Britain should be available to a wide American public, either theatrically or non-theatrically, there is the constant need to show America that Great Britain is a worthy ally. Deeper than this lies the problem of sustaining a sound Anglo-American relation based on a knowledge that both democracies are facing the same way and that both countries have the same standards of decency and the same objects of endeavour.

Planned Production

That the Anglo-American relation, or more properly, the United Nations relation, should be properly sustained it is clear that a more all-embracing plan of strategy should now operate in the interests of economy of material, men time and effort.

Production must be planned.

Canada and the United States will both want the same kind of material from the war fronts. London will be the advance post from which operational units can work and the onus will be on the M.O.I. to see that operational material goes to America.

From the United States and from Canada will come the stories of the United Nations reserves of food and materials. Only by collaboration with New York can this material find its way into the films which Britain will see. At the moment the affairs of Latin America are tied into the Inter-American relation. Collaboration at New York must see that these come into the wider perspective of the United Nations' front and that material used to explain the South American Republics to America is made available to explain them to the wider world on this side of the Atlantic.

Collaboration must yield planned production, and in view of the necessity to conserve film material, that collaboration must also achieve planned release. Nations fighting on the battlefields for their existence must not fight each other for screen space.

O.W.I., through its War Activities Committee, must be the channel to American screens and the M.O.I., through its distribution departments, will be the channel to British screens. The controllers of these channels must collaborate not only in the interest of economy but in the interests of a planned and effective United Nations' information service.

Already Great Britain and Canada are providing material to the War Film Library in Hollywood. This is organised and operated by the Academy of Motion Pictures, Arts and Sciences in order that Hollywood film producers and writers can have authentic material at their disposal for study, for re-enactment and for incorporation in their films.

It is to be hoped that this joint effort is an earnest of further close and practical collaboration.

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ENGLAND

FILM OF THE MONTH

The First of the Few

FIRST of the Few begins and ends with superb flying sequences covering the Battle of Britain. Produced and directed by Leslie Howard, it is a story with all the elements of documentary, about the Spitfire and the man who designed it. The documentary film maker would have made the Spitfire the centre and hero of his picture. *First of the Few* has as its hero R. J. Mitchell, the aeroplane's designer, and the aeroplane itself plays a secondary though important part. The interest and appeal of the picture mainly rely therefore on the human figure.

Leslie Howard plays the part of Mitchell and he acts with customary charm and restraint. The portrayal colours the whole film with this "charm and restraint" and as a result *First of the Few* is much less exciting than it should be considering the quality and dramatic opportunities of the story, and considering also the amount of highly skilled craftsmanship that has gone into the making. Leslie Howard is a good and popular actor and his face and acting are by now well known to British audiences. Perhaps it is this very familarity that deprives Howard's Mitchell of real character and power. Perhaps it is Leslie Howard himself.

If the designer were a genius, Howard's performance shows little sign of the strong and colourful personality that goes with genius.

The film sets out to tell a real-life story and it is clear that those who made it carried out the job with all sincerity. Their sincerity, however, did not carry them far enough. In the sense that the film is documentary *and propaganda* they have failed on certain important points. They have failed, for instance, in clarifying their attitude to the politics of a time that is in vivid memory of most. Politics enter into the film with the refusal of the pre-war government to sanction more money to carry on research on the Spitfire, and again they enter with Lady Houston who appears in a strange interlude backed by her slogan "Wake Up England". It was Lady Houston who provided the money, but the film is content with treating her as fairy godmother without further examination of her political activities. The politics of the time cause Mitchell to expend a great deal of unnecessary time and energy in combating indifference, but in spite of the important part this plays in his life, no clear picture is given of pre-war politics and no definite line is taken. This is a loss to the film and one that is not likely to be overlooked by audiences who are a good deal more politically conscious than they used to be.

There are other defects which could be overlooked in a less important and less realistic film. One is in the emphasis on the Spitfire as the aeroplane that saved Britain. But surely Hurricanes shared in the Battle of Britain!

Another defect is in neglecting to give fuller details of the designing and building of the aeroplane. The chain that holds the film together is the building and perfecting of the fighter. The audience's interest is aroused from the start by reference to technical details, but for the most part, the film fails to explain technicalities that even the layman can now in war-time understand. In addition, the film never clears up the cause of the mysterious crash that occurs during a trial in America.

The turning points of the film is when Mitchell visits Germany and discovers how far advanced the Germans are in aeronautics. This section of the film is well handled. From conversations with Germans (who are made to appear rational human beings) Mitchell is convinced about the inevitability of the war and sees that his job is to produce a fighter that can beat all others. Aware of the extreme urgency, Mitchell overworks on the Spitfire and manages to complete it before his death. From the sacrifice of his life for this purpose the film receives its title.

Despite its shortcomings *First of the Few* has many good points. It is also a smooth, highly-polished job of work with possibly greater propaganda value abroad than it will have here.

★ For your information

IN every progressive enterprise there must be leaders and those who follow behind. As artistic and technical progress in kinematography quickens to the tempo and stimulus of war, "KINEMATOGRAPH WEEKLY" is always to be found "up-with-the-leaders", its well-informed pages radiating perception and far-sighted thinking. Kinematography's leaders themselves know this for truth and turn to "K.W." week by week for information and enlightenment.

Kinematograph WEEKLY

★ 93 LONG ACRE LONDON W.C.2

RADIO

THE growing interchange of productions between Britain and the United States is certainly bringing some liveliness on to our local ether. Corwin's series of six programmes under the title of *A Yank in England* was fine stuff. He is a producer from the Columbia Broadcasting System and came over to do the programmes on the spot—the job being to interpret Anglo-U.S. relationships from the angle of the influx of U.S. troops into this country. Corwin is a producer who really belongs to radio, and there must be few others who can use his impudent technique and get away with it—at any rate without muddling the listener. Although designed for U.S. audiences, the productions were well worth putting into English programmes. Corwin was intelligent, by the way, in his choice of commentator (Ed. Murrow) and composer (Benjamin Britten). A further series is possibly being planned.

Meantime, from the other end our ex-compatriot Alistair Cooke has been working on a series called *America at War* in the B.B.C. New York Studios. The best so far has been *Indiana Arsenal*, the story of a small town of 800 inhabitants which becomes the site for the biggest dry-powder munitions works in the world. Population now 20,000. Cooke uses an impressionist technique which isn't always free of artiness and sentimentality but which may have the advantage of giving English listeners a good sense of atmosphere. The most important thing about Cooke's work is, however, his ingenuity in presenting us with a sense of the varied regions and peoples of the U.S.A.—even the untutored English ear, for instance, must have noticed with interest the great variations of dialect in the boom scenes of *Indiana Arsenal*.

It is reported from U.S. and Canada that the B.B.C. has done a marvellous job of capturing the short wave-lengths. The British programmes, it is said, are by far the easiest to get in contrast to the German and Japanese. A common grouse however, against the B.B.C. is their persistence in putting out music when reception conditions are bad. Most people would prefer a switch to something spoken under such circumstances—you can always get something out of the talking voice even when atmospherics are being a nuisance.

CANADIAN FILM BOARD AT WORK

STANDING fairly high up on the banks of the Ottawa River and thereby considerably open to sun, sky, and a pretty good hunk of Quebec scenery opposite, the National Film Board is a largeish ugly building. Across the road, with sublime inappropriateness, lies the best piece of architecture in Ottawa—the Embassy of Vichy France. There are a lot of swallows, the tugs tow the huge lumber-rafts downstream, and the Film Board building never closes, or at any rate not till very late at night.

It used to be the old Canadian Government Picture Bureau, but since those days it has been enlarged and re-equipped. There are two projection theatres, one of which is also a recording and dubbing studio as well as being large enough for minor sets. The labs have just been overhauled and new machinery installed. There is a big stills department. And rows of cutting rooms, camera rooms, stock rooms; and lots of offices full of people writing scripts and commentaries, wrestling with financial schedules and location accounts. A busy joint, in fact; for it houses virtually the whole Canadian production set-up, and of the 250 men and women employed by the Board some 190 work at these headquarters.

Most of them are Canadians, learning their job in very much the same tough way as the British documentary people did in the 'thirties. But amongst them you find, in addition to the Films Commissioner himself, a few figures known well to us in England—Stuart Legg, Stanley Hawes, Raymond Spottiswood, John Ferno, Joris Ivens, Irving Jacoby, Norman Maclaren.

Two theatrical two-reelers every month, two newsreels trailers a week, cartoon and diagram films, training and instructional films for the Services, all sorts of non-theatricals, including a special series on 16 mm. Kodachrome—the production schedule is big for a young organisation and impressive in relation to a country bigger in area than the United States but with a population of only 12½ million. Add to this the fact that the Board undertakes the organisation of its non-theatrical distribution, has a special department making French versions for Quebec, and has a number of people keeping tabs on things right across Canada as well as in Washington and New York, and it is not surprising that the N.F.B. goes on expanding and is looking for larger premises.

By its constitution, the Film Board has more direct power probably than any other film-propaganda organisation among the United Nations. It is in effect a Government Department with statutory powers.

Actual production differs from England in that the entire set-up is centralised and there are virtually no outside units working to contract (Disney's productions for the Board are an obvious exception). Within the central body, however, departmentalisation has been carried out in terms of production units. There are a series of Directors of Productions, corresponding to our producers, each of whom is responsible for films turned out by the units. Each unit has an Assistant Director of Production (our Director) who is responsible for his own films and in charge of the unit. Into the units are absorbed the cameramen, editors, writers, research workers, etc.

The system is organised to give each individual the maximum amount of responsibility. There is, too, a good deal of specialisation, the various units concentrating on their own particular type of job.

On top of all this there are a number of Supervisors, each being in charge of a department—e.g. Laboratories, Sound, Stills, Non-theatrical distribution, Projection, and so on.

The whole set-up actually works very well. Films are turned out to schedule; and the unit system makes for fluidity, and ability to re-organise internally with the minimum of disturbance. Continual expansion is also possible without muddle.

The Board stands in high repute with the Film Trade and also with other Government Departments. In other words it gets distribution and it gets production facilities. Neither of these would be possible if its production policy and its box office results did not make the grade.

Quite a high percentage of women are working on the creative production side and they look like being a big success. The only person lacking from this set-up is Evelyn Spice, who has not yet been tempted back from the wheatlands of the West by the pungent aroma of Ottawa celluloid.

Taking it by and large, you could say, to those who remember Blackheath, that the National Film Board is like Blackheath multiplied by five, fully equipped, and working one hundred per cent to schedule on an enormous production programme. The place feels good. The people are purposeful and not arty, and they know how to work. And they are not only making the documentary idea an integral part of Canadian life but also helping to push it forward towards new and lively international perspectives.

SIGHT and SOUND

Autumn Issue

6d.

THE BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE,
4 GREAT RUSSELL STREET,
LONDON, W.C.1

Correspondence

TO THE EDITOR,

Sir,

My weekly filmgoing is mainly done at Bromley. We have two supers there, the Gaumont and the Odeon. Both these large circuit houses, but particularly the Odeon, have been regular and staunch supporters of advertising films and there is very seldom a week when we are not roused to jeers and boos by these disgusting shorts. On the other hand, no doubt because these advertising shorts occupied so much of their programme, our two houses used, until a few weeks ago, to show us practically no Ministry Five-Minuters—I doubt whether they showed them more often than one week in ten. Recently, I am happy to say, they have taken to showing the five-minuters regularly, but they still support those horrid little advertising films and this week (August 24–29) this has had a particularly nasty result. Both the Odeon and the Gaumont are showing a horror called *A Sweet Story* advertising Mars bars and Maltesers, which has wasted the time of the technicians at Merton Park Studios and Technicolor and a lot of valuable film stock and other materials which we can ill afford to lose. Now the feature at the Gaumont is *Uncensored*, in which the British Film Industry has made a sincere attempt to give a true and inspiring picture of the fight of Belgian patriots against the Nazis. But *Uncensored* immediately follows *A Sweet Story*, and the two actors taking the parts in the first few minutes of the film, of a priest being dragged off to gaol by the Nazis and a newspaper editor heroically refusing to co-operate with them, are the very men we have just seen on the screen as a whimsical shopkeeper and helpful factory manager, trying to sell us Mars bars. The result of course is fatal to *Uncensored*; the audience bursts into comment and jeers, and the hope of any useful effect from *Uncensored* is ruined. This is a pretty comment on our film business; it shows how they are perfectly prepared to sabotage such puny war effort as they are making. If people haven't the decency to give up making and showing advertising films of their own accord, they should be stopped at once, and a man like Anthony Asquith should have more sense than to ruin a would-be moving realistic film by the use of typed and stagey actors.

A Correspondent

Film Societies

Manchester and Salford

Together the **Manchester and Salford Film Society** and the **Manchester and District Film Institute Society** have made arrangements for a Czech-French film display on October 4th, in association with the Czechoslovak Centre and Fighting French movements in Manchester. They will show *Judas Was a Woman* (La Bête Humaine) and Czechoslovak shorts.

Film displays for the autumn session will be at the Rivoli Cinema on October 18th, November 15th and December 13th.

The Annual General Meeting of the Manchester and Salford Film Society will take place early in October.

Mr. Maddison, recently honorary secretary of the Film Institute Society, has left Manchester on taking up another appointment, and Mr. J. H. Black has been elected in his place. Mr. E. Freidlaender is honorary treasurer.

Ayrshire

ARRANGEMENTS are in hand for the eighth season of the Film Society of Ayrshire and the same two theatres in use last year have been re-engaged. Instead of the programme being shown twice in the same day, the same programme will be shown at Ayr and Kilmarnock on consecutive Sunday evenings. This alteration has been made to obviate travelling and also to cater for men and women engaged in the war effort.

For the opening programme the Council has selected films to build upon the subject of "Man the Enigma". Raymond Massey's study of Abraham Lincoln, *The Spirit of the People*, will be shown, supported by *Man the Enigma* (Pathé), *The 13th Instant* (Kinograph) and the Ministry of Information *Blood Transfusion*. *The Common Touch* or *Gaslight*, *Chico*, *Western Isles* and *Arabian Bazaar* will make up the second programme.

The third programme on the subject "Cartoon" will include George Pal's *Love on the Range*, *How a Cartoon is Made* and *Transfer of Power*, while the fourth programme will be a continental double-feature with *Fredlos* and *Merlusse*. The fifth will have *The Rich Bride* and supporting travel and scientific films, and the Christmas programme will consist of Maeterlinck's *Blue Bird*, *Tales from the Vienna Woods* and *Early One Morning*.

(New Documentary Films Continued)

We Speak to India. Everyman Films. *Director:* Richard Massingham. *Associate Producer:* Alex Shaw. *Camera:* Alex Strasser. *Commentator:* Z. Bokhari. M.O.I. 5 minutes.

It is easy to forget with all the present absorption in the unpleasanter aspects of Indian politics that Indians are giving direct and valuable help to us here in Britain. The film isolates a few Indians and shows the work they are doing here and it pays due to the 40,000 Indian seamen in the Merchant Service and to the men of the Indian Army units at present in training in England. There is a pleasant sequence in a London tube shelter in which an Indian girl student works on her thesis while bombs fall. The film is made with feeling and sympathy, and it should prove of useful propaganda value.

THE UNIT BEHIND THIS SYMBOL

PRODUCERS

Donald Taylor — Alexander Shaw

DIRECTORS

Ralph Bond, Charles de Latour, Ivan Moffatt
John Eldridge, Alan Osbiston, John Banting
Peter Scott, J. Fraser Foulsham

SCRIPT WRITERS

Reg Groves, Dylan Thomas, Diana King

CAMERA DEPARTMENT

Jo Jago, Charles Marlborough, J. Burgoyne-Johnson
Cyril Arapoff, John Havinden

CUTTING ROOM

Alan Osbiston (in charge), Lyla Cranston, Edith Burbeck
Oswald Hafenrichter, Judith Craig, Connie Mason
Leslie Pohler, John Vernon, Mrs. Pugh (Library)

PRODUCTION MANAGERS

Studio: Hal Wilson — *London*: Peter Price — *Location*: Gus Charpentier

PRODUCTION ASSISTANTS

Fred Brown, E. Whitehall, D. Ryan

PRESS

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To Instructional Film-Makers

It is probably vanity which is responsible for the complete failure of many of the instructional films at present being turned out. Film technicians are tending to forget one of the essentials of good craftsmanship and that is, that a job, however technically brilliant, is useless unless it achieves its purpose. Mr. William Wyler, when he makes a film, not only succeeds in his first purpose, which is to entertain, but also achieves each of his effects in that film with deadly accuracy. Every movement, every gesture, every line of dialogue makes its point clearly, concisely and dramatically. This certainty of touch is surely the hallmark of a great director. The apparent simplicity with which it is done masks immense skill and knowledge. And if you don't think William Wyler is a great director substitute anybody, from Pudovkin to Preston Sturgess, whom you think is first class.

Mr. X, a film technician, finds that his war job is the making of instructional films. The films he has to work on, either as director or editor or script writer, or in any other capacity, may deal with any subject from health problems to camouflaging lorries in the snow. All the films will have one thing in common, that they have to instruct a large number of people in how the job is done. If they fail to do this, then they are useless as films and Mr. X is a bad technician and a man without any integrity. Judging by many of the instructional films which we have recently seen Mr. X and his fellow-workers are very often both these things. In fact Mr. X is trying to achieve the studio directors' effects without stopping to consider how that effect is achieved.

The films are often well made, they are frequently amusing and entertaining, but far, far too often they teach absolutely nothing. Frequently indeed they make matters worse by confusing what knowledge the audience may already possess on that subject.

There are two reasons for this failure. One we have mentioned already, the ill-judged vanity of Mr. X. In this third year of war, far too many film makers still cling to their old, sentimental notions about the "Big Time". They still want to see their names in lights or on the credit titles accompanied by suitable orchestral chords. They want their work to send peals of laughter or wracking sobs through vast audiences. They tend to despise the film about health or the film about camouflage. This was not serious in peace time. There were enough people who thought it worth while learning how to dramatise social problems to supply the demand for films about health. But war has brought a greatly increased demand for instructional films and all kinds of film makers are now trying to dramatise subjects in which they are not at all interested. Their minds are still in the Odeons and the Majestics and the most they can do is to apply the old methods to these new problems. They find the new subjects dull so they take them into the studios and sprinkle a few actors around. They find them slow so they speed them up into a series of meaningless flashes by quick cutting. It would almost appear that there is a modern Mrs. Beeton around in some film units: "Take two tanks and smash them, gather a handful of factory workers and mix in, season with a brigadier-general (if a Minister is not in season), put the whole in fifty tins and leave in the cutting room for two years. Dust before showing."

The second reason for the failure of so many instructional films is perhaps more irritating. The heads of all film producing units, whether under direct government control or not, eventually have to show their work to Superior Beings, festooned either with red tabs or with red tape. These creatures still look upon going to the films as something one does after dinner but only occasionally, and even then it's not quite the thing unless it is a good leg show or "that girl Myrna Loy". We would suggest that many shortcomings of the instructional film are due to the desperate desire of producers to please these jolly gentlemen when they visit their projection rooms. Whether Private Brown or Mrs. Jones know any better how to cope with their daily problems after seeing the film is quite unimportant so long as Authority is amused. If a trip to the studios for a smell of the grease paint can be fitted in so much the better. The studio is a new toy which still dazzles.

Thus we have a situation in which producer and film maker work together to the same wrong ends, both forgetting what their war job is. We think that the only way out of the muddle is to suggest that everybody engaged on this work looks upon each film as a test, and an extremely exacting test too, of his capabilities as a film maker. Because we believe that instructional films during this war can be of the greatest importance. Never before has there been a time when there has been such a great demand for accurate, intelligible and well presented information and instruction. Everybody in their daily lives has been presented with new problems on the solution of which depends their well-being, their peace of mind and ultimately their destiny. The supplying of the answers to these problems is a job of vital importance and those who do it well, can feel that they have done something of extreme value as well as a job which is of as much service as the work of the best studio director.

In conclusion we would like to point out that we are not unaware of the excellent work done in this field by various units and individuals. Their work already receives tributes in many places. But there are still many who cheat and dilly-dally. To them these remarks are addressed.

FILMS OF GREAT BRITAIN LIMITED

PARK STUDIO
PUTNEY PARK LANE
S.W. 15. PUTNEY 6274.

Managing Director:
ANDREW BUCHANAN

SHORTS BOOKINGS

September–October

(The following shorts bookings are selected from a list covering its members supplied by the News & Specialised Theatres Association.)

	Week commencing
A Modern Miracle	
The Tatler, Manchester	Sept. 27th
Alaska Tour	
The News Theatre, Manchester	20th
At a Country Fair	
The News Theatre, Birmingham	Oct. 11th
The News Theatre, Leeds	5th
Cairo	
Eros Theatre, W.1	Sept. 27th
Dartmouth	
The Tatler News Theatre, Liverpool	20th
Delhi	
The Tatler News Theatre, Liverpool	27th
The Embassy, Notting Hill Gate	27th
The Classic, Hammersmith, W.6	Oct. 4th
The Classic, Hendon, N.W.4	4th
Desert Ghost	
The Tatler Newsreel Theatre, Newcastle	Sept. 27th
Exploring Space	
The World's News Theatre, W.2	Oct. 11th
Flashing Blades	
The News Theatre, Bristol	4th
Friend of Man	
The Tatler Theatre, Manchester	27th
From Nuts to Scrap	
The News Theatre, Manchester	Oct. 4th
Great American Divide	
News Theatre, Bristol	Sept. 20th
Waterloo Station News Theatre, S.E.1	Oct. 11th
Heroes of the Atlantic	
The Tatler Newsreel Theatre, Newcastle	Sept. 20th
Highway of Friendship	
The News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne	27th
H.M. Motor Launches	
The Tatler Theatre, Manchester	20th
The News Theatre, Leeds	28th
How Goes Chile	
The News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne	20th
Indian Durbar	
The Classic Cinema, Portsmouth	Oct. 4th
In the Box	
The News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne	11th
Land of the Incas	
Waterloo Station News Theatre, S.E.1	Sept. 20th
London Before the Blitz	
Embassy, Notting Hill Gate	Oct. 11th
Main Street on the march	
News Theatre, Leeds	Sept. 12th
March of Time No. 2—8th Year	
The Classic, S.W.17	27th
The Vogue Cinema, S.W.17	27th
The Classic, Hendon, N.W.11	27th
The Classic, Southampton	27th
The News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne	Oct. 11th
March of Time No. 3—8th Year	
The News Theatre, Bristol	4th
The Tatler, Manchester	4th
The Tatler, Chester	5th
The Tatler, Leeds	5th
The Tatler News Theatre, Liverpool	4th
The News Theatre, Leeds	5th
Micky's Birthday Party	
The News Theatre, Bristol	11th
Modern Miracle	
The Tatler, Birmingham	Sept. 27th
Native Artisans	
The Tatler, Chester	5th
Nice Work if You Can do it	
The News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne	4th
Night Shift	
The News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne	4th
Peoples of Canada	
The News Theatre, Bristol	11th
The News Theatre, Birmingham	Sept. 27th
The News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne	27th
The World's News Theatre, W.2	Oct. 4th
Points of View No. 7	
Victoria Street News Theatre, S.W.1	Sept. 20th
The Classic Theatre, S.W.17	Oct. 11th
The Classic, South Croydon	4th
Points of View No. 8	
Waterloo Station News Theatre, S.E.1	Sept. 20th
The Tatler Newsreel Theatre, Newcastle	11th
This Fowl Business	
The Classic, S.W.17	Oct. 11th

FEATURE REVIVALS

Back Street	
The Tatler Theatre, Leeds	Sept. 21st
Four Feathers	
The Tatler, Chester	28th
Major Barbara	
The Classic, Southampton	20th
The Tatler, Leeds	Oct. 12th
Nothing Sacred	
The Tatler, Chester	12th

No. 6

THE CAMEL AND THE FLY

RFU

A FLY, chancing to sit on the back of a camel who was going along weighed down with heavy burdens, was quite delighted with himself, as he appeared to be so much higher. After they made a long journey, they came together in the evening to the stable. The fly immediately exclaimed, skipping lightly to the ground: "See, I have got down directly, that I may not weary you longer, so weighted as you are." The camel replied: "I thank you; but neither when you were on me did I find myself oppressed by your weight, nor do I feel myself at all lightened now you have dismounted."

MORAL: *Wear your hobnailed boots if you would make your presence felt.*

REALIST FILM UNIT

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